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ABSTRACT

The teacher's guide presents two Cape Verdean folktales, background information, discussion questions, and activity suggestions for grades 4-6. The objective is to teach students about Cape Verde and its culture through folklore. The guide contains five sections. Section I offers a description of Cape Verdean folklore, describes five ways folklore is useful in a culture, and points out what folklore can tell about a culture. Section II presents background information about Cape Verde and its people. Section III contains the first story, "The Biggest Liar," in four parts, with instructions for introducing the story and 4-7 discussion questions for each part. Topics relate to content, cultural and geographical implications, and value judgments. The activity asks students to list the attributes of Nho Lobo with substantiation from the story. Section IV presents the second story, "Storm Coming." The introduction and discussion questions stress Cape Verdean values and speculations as to why these are so. Activity suggestions include acting out the story with different endings, and Americanizing the tale using American characters. The final section compares Cape Verdean and American folklore, particularly animal stories and liar and trickster tales. The student booklet appears in ED 137 152. (CK)

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Nho Lobo

Folk Tales of the Cape Verdean People

Teacher's Guide

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The American Committee for Cape Verde, Inc.

Nho Lobo

Folk Tales of the Cape Verdean People

Translated from Crioulo
(the language of the Cape Verdean people)
by: The Cape Verdean Educators Collaborative

Written for Upper Elementary School
by: Patricia Nyhan and Raymond A. Almeida

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TCHUBA means rain in Crioulo, the language of the Cape Verdean people. Throughout five centuries of Portuguese colonial rule in our drought ridden West African islands, our poets and song writers have used the word as a metaphor or symbol for "hope".

TCHUBA, the American Committee for Cape Verde, is an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt organization. TCHUBA is engaged in the production of educational materials and programs for use in America as well as self-help development programs in the Republic of Cape Verde.

The leadership of TCHUBA is composed of Cape Verdeans, Cape Verdean-Americans, and other individuals who share our dedication to "life for Cape Verde" and to cultural pluralism in American life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
TCHUBA - The American Committee for Cape Verde	ii
Table of Contents	iii
HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS	iv
TEACHING ABOUT CAPE VERDEAN FOLKLORE	v
CAPE VERDE	
Map	viii
About The Place	ix
About the People	x
"THE BIGGEST LIAR"	
Introducing the Story	xi
Text	
Discussion Questions	
Part 1	xii
Part 2	xiii
Part 3	xiv
Introducing Part 4	xv
Discussion Questions	
Part 4	xvi
"STORM COMING"	
Introducing the Story	xviii
Text	
Discussion Questions	xix
COMPARING CAPE VERDEAN AND AMERICAN FOLKLORE	xx

HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

This Teacher's Guide has been printed in two colors -- one for teacher material (blue) and one for story texts (white). The texts are given here without the illustrations that appear in the Student Book (to save space). The Arabic page numbers shown indicate the corresponding pages in the Student Book. Roman numerals are used for pages in the Teacher's Guide.

TEACHING ABOUT CAPE VERDEAN FOLKLORE

FOLK TALES OF THE CAPE VERDEAN PEOPLE represents the first attempt at collecting Cape Verdean folklore for use in American schools. The Student Booklet contains only a sampling of the rich folklore of the Cape Verdeans. This Teacher's Guide has been designed so that the stories can be presented with minimal teacher preparation. They can be handled separately or together (questions for each story or part of a story are self-contained in the Guide), comprising anywhere from single lessons to longer units. These curriculum materials have been designed for use with children in Grades 4-6. Since the first story is quite long, teaching it in parts is recommended.

The tales can be placed into your curriculum at any point you feel they might fit: in a social studies unit on culture, Africa, or colonialism, for example, or as part of a study of folklore in language arts.

WHAT IS CAPE VERDEAN FOLKLORE?

The folklore of the Cape Verdean people, like that of other cultures, comes from an oral tradition. The stories, poems, and sayings have been handed down by word of mouth, rather than in written form. The authors are the Cape Verdean people, or folk. ("Folk" as Noah Webster would have it refers to the great proportion of the members of a people that determines the group character and that tends to preserve its characteristic form of civilization and its customs, arts and crafts, legends, traditions, and superstitions from generation to generation. Many of the folktales of the Cape Verdean people are animal stories and reflect both the West African and European origins of the Cape Verdeans. The tales are always changing in the re-telling, adapting to the changing needs and experiences of the people.

After discussing this general definition of Cape Verdean folklore with your class, you may wish to look briefly at how it functions in the culture. (Or you may wish to postpone this discussion until after the stories have been read.)

HOW IS FOLKLORE USEFUL IN A CULTURE?

1. The stories are enjoyable and entertaining; they can turn dull work into play.

2. They educate the young by expressing the customs and beliefs of the people. For example, they show what behavior is good and what is disapproved of.

3. They are one place we can "do things we're not supposed to." For instance, we all feel greedy and lazy sometimes, like the character Nho Lobo* in these tales, but our parents tell us not to act this way. Listening to a story about Nho Lobo however, we can enjoy it and it's o.k.--it's just a story.

4. If we are Cape Verdean, telling these stories make us feel part of our group -- the Cape Verdean people. Most people want to feel part of a group.

5. The stories can carry messages about things we think are wrong in our community or society ("social protest", in other words). For instance, many Cape Verdeans were slaves before slavery was ended; their tales might reflect attitudes about this fact.

---

*"Nho Lobo" pronounced NYŌ LŌ'BU

WHAT CAN FOLKLORE TELL US ABOUT A CULTURE?

Ask the class to think of the stories in the Student Booklet as a "window" or a lens through which they can look at the Cape Verdean culture. Keep in mind the functions listed above and try to draw on them in your study of each story. After reading each part of a story, ask the class to answer the question, "What does this tell us about the Cape Verdean people?"

Caution your pupils not to draw too many cultural conclusions from their reading especially in the absence of other information. Remember that the main function of folk stories is to entertain.

After you have read the two folk tales use the section at the end of the Guide ("comparing Cape Verdean and American Folklore") as a useful context for class discussion.

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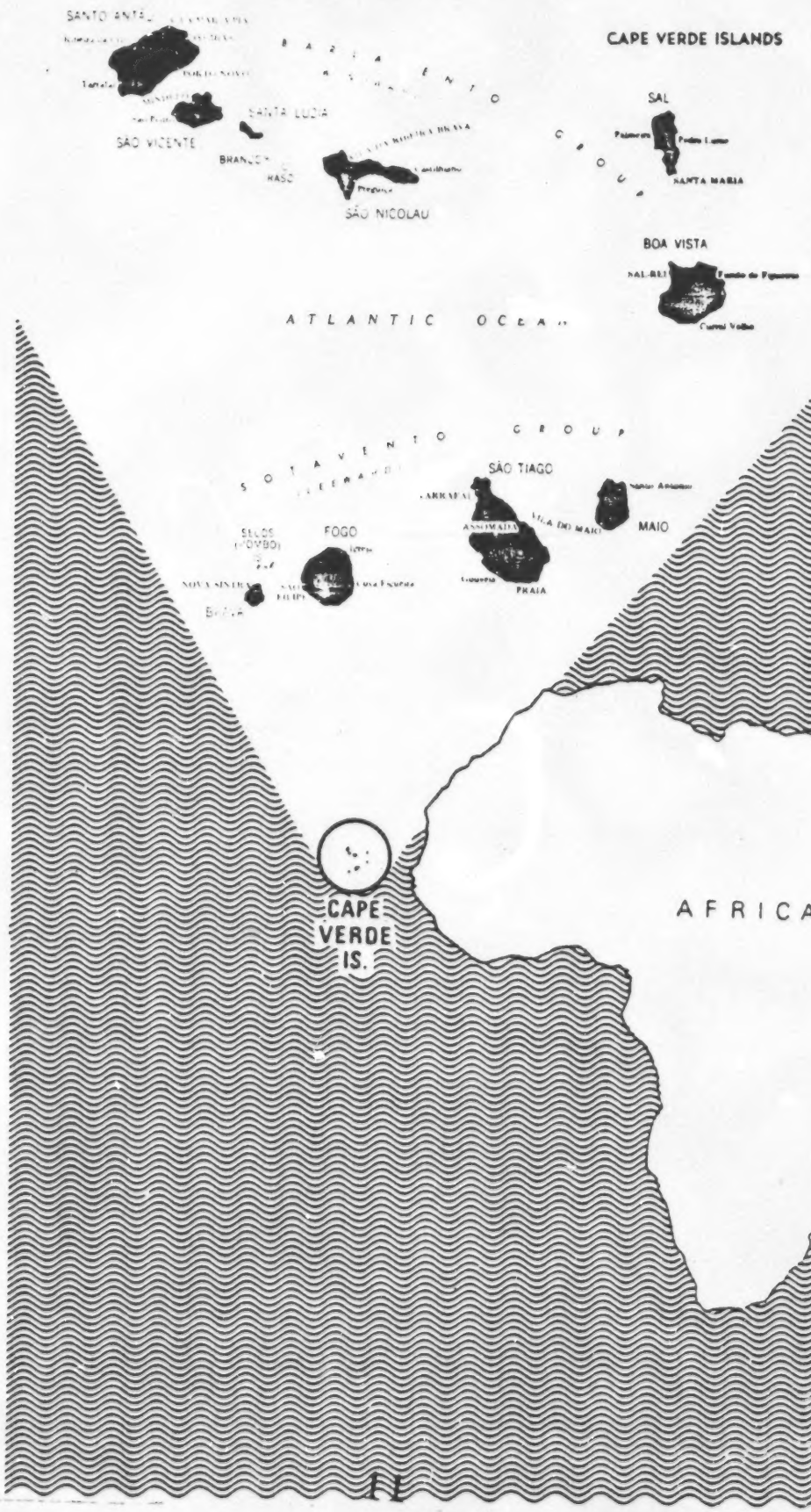

CAPE VERDE

About the place:

The Cape Verde Islands are situated in the Atlantic Ocean about 370 miles off the coast of West Africa. This group of ten small islands bear the name of *Verde* because they are located close to Cap Vert in Senegal. The name of this tiny country does not paint a true picture of what Cape Verde usually looks like. In this part of the world the hot drying winds which blow off the Sahara Desert cause continuous cycles of drought. The rainy season is very unpredictable. If a little rain falls in July, August and September then there will be food and Cape Verde will really turn green. If it doesn't rain until September or October the seed the farmers have planted will have already died. If too much rain comes at any one time, all of the seed and the precious fertile top soil will be washed down the mountain sides to the sea. Some times it doesn't rain for many years at a time. In these periods of drought the people suffer greatly from food shortages, hunger and disease.

The total land area of the Republic of Cape Verde is just a little bit larger than the state of Rhode Island. Most of the Islands were formed many millions of years ago by volcanic activity. Even today there is still an active volcano on the island of Fogo. Most of Cape Verde is a rugged mountainous country with many isolated valleys.

CAPE VERDE

About the people:

Cape Verdeans are a multi-racial people. A people of many faces but *one people.* A people linked by a common language-Crioulo, and a common culture -the Cape Verdean culture. A people tied together in a common history of colonial oppression and constant struggle to survive the hardships of life in Cape Verde.

Portuguese explorers first came to the Islands around the year 1456. Soon after their arrival they began to take people from the nearby coast of West Africa and keep them as slaves to work the barren land of Cape Verde. Some of these African captives would be sold to slave merchants and shipped to plantations in the *New World.* Because of the remoteness of the islands and the difficulties of transportation and communication, a population of mixed European and African racial backgrounds developed.

For 500 years Cape Verde was a colony of Portugal. In order to escape the hardships of life during times of severe drought, many people emigrated to other Portuguese colonies in Africa or Portugal. Cape Verdeans have been emigrating to America for over 150 years. Today there are about 300,000 Cape Verdean-Americans. The first large numbers of people came to New England as crewmen aboard whaling ships. Later Cape Verdeans came to America as contract laborers who worked in the cranberry bogs of southeastern Massachusetts or the textile mills and shoe factories of New England. Cape Verdeans still come to America and to other immigrant communities throughout Europe to make new lives for the families they bring with them and to help build a strong nation for the families they have left behind in the Islands.

On July 5, 1975, Cape Verde became an independent country. Independence did not come easy. The people of neighboring Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde fought against the Portuguese colonial Government for over 13 years before total independence was finally won. Today, Cape Verdean immigrant communities in America and around the world are joining hands to build a future of hope for the people of their island homeland.

THE BIGGEST LIAR

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Outsmarting others is a common idea in folk tales from many cultures. Among the everyday people who do not hold the power in their society, cleverness can be an important way to get ahead in life. As the tale The Biggest Liar shows, even a little boy can win victories if he remains calm and uses his head wisely. Discuss this idea with your class briefly before reading the story. After your pupils have read each part, you may wish to use the discussion questions.

THE BIGGEST LIAR

PART 1: FOOLED BY A BOY

Once there was a man who thought he could tell the biggest and best lies in the whole world. "I'll show everybody," he said. "If I find anyone who can tell bigger lies than me, I'll give him my cow." And so he set out on the long dusty mountain road to the village...the old man, his old cow and a bag of the biggest lies in the whole world.

At every step along the way his neighbors tried to tell better lies than the old man. By the time it was dark, no one had won the old man's cow.

Late that night the man came to a hut at the bottom of a cliff. He woke up a little boy who was sleeping inside. "My pipe needs a light," he said. "Please give me a light from your fire."

The boy only answered by stirring the fire. Finally the man got tired of waiting. He asked, "Menin *(little boy)*, what are you doing?"

"I'm dividing today's fire from yesterday's and day before yesterday's. Then I'll give you some," the boy said.

The man didn't understand. "Menin, give me some water," he said.

"All right," the boy said. He began to shake some water up and down in a bottle.

The man asked, "Why don't you just give me a cup of water?"

"Well, I'm dividing today's water from yesterday's--to give you *fresh* water."

The man couldn't understand! What a strange boy this is, thought the the old man.

"Menin, where's your mother?" he asked.

"She's gone to the king's palace to sew it up with her needle and thread. It was torn last night."

"What! cried the man. "Well, where is your father?"

"He's gone to the river to get some water in a flowerpot with a hole in it. He's going to water his garden."

"Really?" said the man. He couldn't understand this little boy with all the answers. (He thought, "I'll test him.") "Menin," he asked, "Did you hear? A child was born last night with seven arms, seven legs and seven necks."

The boy quickly answered. "Senhor, I'm not sure, but I think I found something of that baby's. This morning I went to the river for water. There I found a dress with seven sleeves and seven collars."

"Really?" said the man. "Well, did you hear? A donkey took a trip into the sky last week."

"Senhor, I'm not sure...when I went to the river last week I heard thunder. When I looked up, I saw a saddle falling out of the sky. It must be that donkey's."

("I'll test him again," thought the man.) He asked the boy, "Menin, did you hear? The river caught fire last week."

"Senhor," said the boy, "I'm not sure...but last week we caught a lot of fish burnt on just one side. The fire in the river cooked them, I guess."

The man couldn't think of any more lies. "My dear Menin," he cried, "take my cow. You are the smartest liar of all!"

13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART 1: FOOLED BY A BOY

1. What "lies" did the boy tell the man?

2. Where did the boy say his mother and father had gone?

3. How did the man test the boy?

4. What can you tell about the geography of Cape Verde from reading this story?

5. What do you think the little boy's home was like? How is your home and neighborhood different from his?

6. Which is your favorite "lie" in Part 1? Could you fool somebody you know with it? Why or why not?

7. What do these "lies" tell you about the Cape Verdean culture at the time this folk story originated?

PART 2: STEALING THE ROAD

On his way home from the boy's hut, the man saw Nho Lobo, the wolf. Nho Lobo was lying in the sun, dreaming about food. (The lazy wolf was always dreaming about food.) Nho Lobo woke up and said, "Senhor, you look so sad. What's the matter?"

The man answered, "I lost my cow. I thought I was the best liar in the world, but a little boy told better lies and won my cow. Now I don't know how to get my cow back."

(Nho Lobo thought, "I'd like that cow for my dinner. I'll tell this man I will help him. But then I'll trick him and take his cow.")

"Come with me!" Nho Lobo said to the man. "I'll get her back for you."

"No, I don't trust you," said the man. "You will trick me."

"Don't worry," said Nho Lobo "I have seven bags full of lies here. If I open one of them, the lies will cover the town."

"All right," said the man. "Let's go!"

Soon the little boy heard a noise outside his hut. He looked out and saw Nho Lobo and the man. "Nho Lobo is coming to take my cow," he said to himself. "What can I do?" He thought for a moment. Then he called to the man, "Where are the seven wolves you said you'd bring? You're only bringing one. Well, bring him in. We'll tie him up and kill him."

"What!" cried Nho Lobo. "Kill me! That's why you brought me here! Well, you'll never catch me!" And off he ran.

"Ha, ha--I tricked you, Nho Lobo. You won't get my cow now!" said the boy.

"Senhor, why are you standing there?" the boy asked the man. "Don't you know Nho Lobo is going to steal the road and put it in his pocket? How will you get home then?"

"What!" cried the man. He ran to catch Nho Lobo before he stole the road.

Nho Lobo hid on the side of a mountain. The man passed him, but didn't see him. He was running so fast, he fell off the cliff and broke his leg.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART 2: STEALING THE ROAD

1. How did Nho Lobo propose to get the man's cow back from the boy?

2. How did the boy trick Nho Lobo?

3. How did he get rid of the man?

4. If you were in the boy's place, what else could you do to keep the cow you had won? What might be some other ways to act in this situation?

5. Think of a time when you had to protect something you wanted to keep and somebody else tried to take it from you (like the boy and his cow). A situation like this, where two people want the same thing, is called a conflict. How did your conflict end? What other ways could it have ended? Did the boy in the story choose a good way out of his conflict over the cow?

PART 3: THE EVIL EYE

Three days later the little boy went to the mountain to get some hay for his cow. Nho Lobo was still there. He was a hungry wolf, after three days with no food. When he saw the boy he said to himself, "Nho Lobo, today you'll have a good dinner."

Suddenly, the boy saw Nho Lobo. He quickly put his head down and looked sad.

"Menin," asked Nho Lobo, "Why are you sad? Don't you have any mother?"

"No," answered the boy. "My mother is dead."

"Why did she die?"

"She died because I looked at her with my evil eye," said the boy.

"And your father?"

"He is dead, too."

"Why did he die?"

"I looked at him, too," said the boy. (He was still looking down.) "Everybody I look at dies."

"What!" shouted Nho Lobo. "And are you looking at me now with your evil eye?"

"Not yet, but I'm going to soon!" cried the boy.

Nho Lobo left in a hurry, running backwards to keep an eye on the boy. He ran fast to the side of the mountain. He was afraid. He heard the boy shout, "In a minute I'm going to look at you. I've almost found you!"

Nho Lobo jumped up. He jumped so high, he fell off the mountain backwards. And that was the end of Nho Lobo.

The little boy turned around and walked home. He was very happy. He still had his cow, and he knew he could tell the biggest lies in the world. He had fooled the old man and outsmarted Nho Lobo.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART 3: THE EVIL EYE

1. Why did the boy say he was sad?

2. What was Nho Lobo afraid of?

3. Do you think Nho Lobo got what he deserved? How else could the boy have gotten rid of him? Would the little boy's kind of cleverness be praised among your friends?

4. What is an "evil eye"? Do you know any other stories about evil eyes? Why do you suppose people in many different cultures believe in an evil eye? Do Americans believe in an evil eye or have any similar beliefs?

PART 4: A NEW ENDING TO AN OLD STORY*

"If you don't want to be Nho Lobo, don't dress in his skin!"

"Si bu ca crê ser Nho Lobo, ca bu bisti sê pele!"

-- popular Cape Verdean saying

WHO IS NHO LOBO?

Nho Lobo ("Mr. Wolf") is the best-known character in Cape Verdean folklore. His antics are known to young and old alike. Getting to know him can bring insights into the culture from which he springs. This lazy, sneaky fellow is the embodiment of anti-social behaviors to Cape Verdeans, something like Br'er Rabbit to Americans, or Reynard the Fox to Europeans. His tricks spoil things for others, and his greed takes things away from others -- behavior which a poor, highly interdependent society cannot tolerate. "If everyone acted as selfish as Nho Lobo, where would we be?" is one message implicit in the stories.

WHAT DOES THE SAYING MEAN?

The saying quoted above is well-known to Cape Verdeans and understood to mean, "If you don't want to be like Nho Lobo, don't dress in his clothes," or don't act like him. A mother might say this to her child, for instance, when she sees him or her acting selfishly. (In America, a greedy child might be reprimanded at the dinner table with, "If you don't want to be called a pig, don't act like one.")

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*Remember that Part 4 was written by a Cape Verdean-American as a "new" ending to an old folk tale in a "new" Cape Verde.

INTRODUCING NHO LOBO TO THE CLASS

Your pupils met Nho Lobo in "THE BIGGEST LIAR." Ask them to try to describe him from memory, and list his attributes on the chalkboard; for example:

lazy, greedy, stupid, untrustworthy, cowardly

Now ask them to tell what Nho Lobo did in the story and write statements on the board:

- tried to trick the man & get his cow
- ran away from the boy & hid
- was fooled by boy's "evil eye" story
- fell off a mountain

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART 4

1. How do you feel about Nho Lobo? Without naming names, do you know anyone in real life like him? Do you like having this person in your group. What would happen if everyone in your group were like him?

2. What happens in a group when there is a job to be done and one person doesn't help? Do you think this happens in larger groups such as communities, too? (Use some local examples.) Think of the Cape Verdean culture as one large community for a minute; can you see why Cape Verdean people think it is important to cooperate with each other and not act like Nho Lobo?

3. Is Nho Lobo someone you could depend on? Why do we need to depend on, or trust, our friends? In large groups such as communities, people depend on each other, too: we depend on garbage collectors to pick up our garbage, mail carriers to collect our mail, etc. Your neighbors probably depend on you to keep your yard cleaned up, or to keep your dog from barking all day long, or to be careful not to hit softballs through their windows. In communities, people depend on each other in many ways.

(Can you name some more?) They are interdependent. Survival and interdependence go hand in hand in the Cape Verdean culture. Can you see why Cape Verdeans don't want to be like Nho Lobo?

4. Think about the Cape Verdean saying, "If you don't want to be Nho Lobo, don't dress in his skin." What do you think this means? Why did the old woman in the story whisper it to the man? What is one lesson of this story?

PART 4: A NEW ENDING TO AN OLD STORY*

"If you don't want to be Nho Lobo, don't dress in his skin!"
"Si bu ca crê ser Nho Lobo, ca bu bisti sê pele!"
---a popular Cape Verdean saying

The next day the old man went to town to tell the people what had happened to him. He told them that he always had thought he could tell the biggest lies in the world. Then he told them about the little boy who had tricked him with even bigger lies. The old man was very sad that he had been beaten by a little boy.

20

When the man had finished his story, an old wise woman whispered in his ear so no one else could hear:

"The little boy is a bigger liar than you, but he is young. We hope he will not grow up to be as big a fool as you."

Poor man! He believed the lies of Nho Lobo and the clever little boy.

Poor little boy! He does not yet know what the wise old woman knows: "If you do not want to be Nho Lobo, don't put on his skin!"

21

"STORM COMING"

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Folk tales teach us certain things about a culture; what's important to one group of people is not always important to another -- like snow to Eskimos, or rain to the people of West Africa. In this story, you will learn about two crops that are important to Cape Verdeans -- mandioca and carapata. (Brief descriptions of their appearance, methods of cultivation and uses)

People in all cultures have the same basic needs, such as food, clean air, shelter and love, but each culture has its own slightly different values -- the things its people believe in. "STORM COMING" has some clues about Cape Verdean values; for example, cooperation and hard work. Think about these and look for other clues about values as you read the story.

STORM COMING

Mandioca is a staple food in Cape Verde and in many other countries in West Africa. A "staple" is a food which the majority of the people depend upon for most of what they eat. In the Caribbean and Central America it is known as *manioc* or *yuca*. The mandioca plant has large edible roots. The dark brown skins of these roots hide the starchy white vegetable which has the consistency of a yam or sweet potato. Mandioca is easy to plant. Just cut a piece of a shoot from a young mandioca plant and stick it in the ground. If the rains come on time and you keep Nho Lobo out of your garden you'll have plenty of mandioca in a few months.

22

Nho Lobo was a lazy wolf. And greedy, too--he ate everything he could find. But his nephew Tubinho was different; he was a worker.

One day they planted mandioca* together. Tubinho worked hard, digging the soil and planting the mandioca shoots. But by the end of the day, his uncle had eaten up all the new shoots. Poor Tubinho had to plant some more.

A few days later, Nho Lobo saw Tubinho's plants growing high. He went to his nephew and said, "I'm hungry. I wish I had some of that mandioca." Tubinho told him it wasn't ready to eat. But the wolf answered, "Then give me something else to eat. But I'd really like that mandioca." Nho Lobo begged and begged. Finally Tubinho pulled up a plant and gave it to him.

Nho Lobo loved the plant, but he didn't love work. He made a plan to take all the mandioca away from Tubinho.

"You don't have to work here any more," he told his nephew. "I'll do the work and give you some plants when they are ready." But he tricked Tubinho, he ate all the mandioca himself in one day.

23

Two days later, Tubinho passed by Nho Lobo's house. In his hand he had two long ropes made from carapata* he had cut. When Nho Lobo saw him he asked,"What are you going to do with all that rope?" Tubinho pointed to a black cloud in the sky.

"Well, what is it?" asked Nho Lobo.

"A big storm is coming," said Tubinho. "It's going to kill everything that isn't tied."

"Sell me some rope," said Nho Lobo.

"I can't sell this rope," said Tubinho "I need to tie myself to a tree so the storm won't get me." He started to tie himself.

"Tie me first!" cried Nho Lobo. So Tubinho tied him to a fig tree. He knotted the two ropes together. Then he walked away and left his uncle there.

*_Carapata_ is a rugged plant that grows wild everywhere on the rocky mountain slopes of Cape Verde. Cape Verdeans pull the strong white fibers from the green pointed leaves of the carapata plant. After the fibers are dried in the sun they can be used to make strong rope or twine. Some people even make floor mats, pocket books and many other household items from the fiber of the carapate plant.

A few days later, a monkey came to the fig-tree. He started to eat some figs. Nho Lobo was still tied there. "Throw me a fig, monkey!" he shouted. "I'm so hungry."

The monkey threw a fig into the wolf's mouth. Soon Nho Lobo was crying again. "Untie me, Monkey," he begged.

"No, I'm not going to untie you. I can't trust you," said the monkey.

"I'll give you my land if you let me go," said Nho Lobo.

"No," answered the monkey. "I don't trust you."

"Please, Monkey! I'll give you my land and everything on it!" cried Nho Lobo. But the monkey said no. Four more times he begged. Finally, the monkey felt sorry for Nho Lobo and untied him.

When Nho Lobo got free, he suddenly grabbed the monkey's tail and pulled hard.

"What are you doing?" cried the monkey.

"Just trying to wake up my hand," said Nho Lobo. "It fell asleep when I was tied up."

The monkey screamed, "Nho Lobo, let me go! Please let me go! I've been so good to you!"

But Nho Lobo laughed and said, "No, I'm not going to let you go. I'm going to kill you and eat you--now!" Tubinho was close by on a hill and heard their noise. He called, "Oh Nho Lobo, do you know the best way to eat the monkey?"

"No, how?" asked Nho Lobo.

"Tie his feet together and throw him up in the air," said Tubinho. "He'll fall down into your mouth, and that way you won't lose even a hair."

"Tubinho you're a smart boy! That's the way to do it," said Nho Lobo. So he took the monkey and threw him high in the air. The monkey fell down and ran away. He found Tubinho and said, "Thank you, you saved me from Nho Lobo."

26

And Nho Lobo stood there all day with his mouth open...waiting.

27

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Tubinho get back at Nho Lobo for eating his mandioca plants?

2. How did Nho Lobo trick the monkey after he got untied?

3. What did Tubinho do to help the monkey?

4. What kind of fellow is Nho Lobo? Do you know of any characters from other stories who remind you of him?

5. Do people like Nho Lobo usually win or lose in real life? Can you think of a situation in which someone like Nho Lobo might win in some ways but lose in others? (someone who gets rich but isn't happy, or gets fun out of tricking his classmates but loses friends, etc.)

6. What personal qualities, or values, does this story praise? (hard work, cooperation, trustworthiness, generosity, cleverness) From what you know of Cape Verdean culture, why would these values be important? Think of other cultures you have studied: are these same values important in them?

7. Tubinho and the monkey both helped Nho Lobo in this tale; they were cooperative. Why is cooperation necessary in an agricultural society? Do you think cooperation is as necessary in an industrial society like America? What are some ways Cape Verdeans show cooperation in their culture?

8. Try acting out this story with different endings, showing other ways Nho Lobo could have gotten what he deserved.

9. Turn this tale into an American story, using a popular character from the comics, movies, or TV as Nho Lobo (Bugs Bunny, The Flintstones, Road Runner, Cookie Monster, etc.)

COMPARING CAPE VERDEAN AND AMERICAN FOLKLORE

Discuss the following notion with your class after their study of the stories:

Every known culture in the world has folklore, and many tales from different cultures have things in common. Do the two Cape Verdean stories remind you of any American stories you know?

ANIMAL STORIES IN AMERICAN FOLKLORE

Americans also have folk tales about animals. (Have the class think of some.) One popular one is "The Tar Baby," with Br'er Rabbit. (If the story is available in your anthology or a library book at your school, you might want to have your class read it.)

Br'er Rabbit is like Nho Lobo, he plays tricks on others, is lazy and untrustworthy. Like Nho Lobo stories, the folk authors of Uncle Remus tales originally came from West Africa. African slaves in the U.S. used to tell the stories to their children. In these stories, the weak can beat the strong, especially by using their brains. How do the Nho Lobo stories show the same message?

LIARS AND TRICKSTERS IN AMERICAN FOLKLORE

American folklore has hundreds of stories about liars and tricksters. Like the little boy in the story "The Biggest Liar", the American liars don't tell very bad lies; they just exaggerate or tell tall tales. Their cleverness usually makes them win out over someone else.

If your pupils cannot think of any American tricksters, remind them of the story of Tom Sawyer whitewashing the fence. (from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, by Mark Twain. The excerpt is available in many anthologies. Even though this story was originally written, it has been told and retold so often that now it is a part of American folklore.) In the story, Tom tricks his friends into doing his work for him.

The Paul Bunyan lumberjack stories are full of liars, or tall-tale tellers. Ask your pupils to think of some Paul Bunyan stories and compare them with the Cape Verdean stories.

After being brought up never to lie, your pupils might be amused to learn that adults all over the U.S. hold lying contests (just like in "The Biggest Liar"). In some rural communities Americans still refer to a "Liars' Bench" -- the place in a town where men gather to tell tall tales. "Do you know what I saw?" is often heard in our language. Americans even have liars' clubs; for instance, the "Goofy Liars' Club of Decatur, Illinois -- Organizers of the International Liars' Contest."

One reason for emphasizing the point about lying in American folklore is to keep your pupils from developing the mistaken notion that the Cape Verdean stories show Cape Verdeans to be liars. In both cultures real lying is frowned upon, but in both cultures cleverness has been traditionally admired -- especially as a way to get ahead in life, or beat someone stronger than oneself or as a way of coping with difficult oppressive circumstances.

Briefly discuss with your class the history of Cape Verde as a colony for 500 years and a long-time slave holding society. Then ask them how this history might have caused the Cape Verdeans to admire cleverness. How have things changed for Cape Verdeans? Do you think their folklore will change now that Cape Verde is an independent country?